

Section 6.—Religions.

At each of the censuses from 1871 to 1931 every inhabitant of Canada has been asked to state the religious body of which he is a member or an adherent. During the sixty-year period there have been various fluctuations in the proportions of the population belonging to the leading religious bodies, and these fluctuations are, in a new country like this, largely occasioned by the religious affiliations of immigrants.

Throughout the sixty-year period something like two-fifths of the population of Canada has been of the Roman Catholic faith, the 1931 percentage, inclusive of Greek Catholics, being 41·30. Methodists were 16·27 p.c. of the population in 1871 but fell to 13·19 p.c. in 1921, while Presbyterians increased from 15·63 p.c. in 1871 to 16·04 p.c. in 1921, being reinforced by a considerable immigration from Scotland after the beginning of the century. The fusion of the Methodists and Congregationalists in 1925 with a large section of the Presbyterians, as the United Church of Canada, left that body the second largest religious body in the Dominion in 1931 with 19·44 p.c. of the population. The Presbyterians who did not adhere to the United Church of Canada numbered 8·39 p.c. of the population in 1931. The proportion of Anglicans in the population of Canada fell from 14·17 p.c. in 1871 to 12·69 p.c. in 1901 but thereafter the large immigration from the British Isles raised it to 16·02 p.c. in 1921, followed by a slight falling-off to 15·76 p.c. in 1931. The Baptists have shown a fairly steady decline from 6·87 p.c. in 1871 to 4·27 p.c. in 1931.

The immigration from non-English-speaking countries during the first three decades of the twentieth century has led to a great growth of the religious bodies whose members come from the continent of Europe. Thus the Lutherans, who were only 1·09 p.c. of the population in 1871 and 1·72 p.c. in 1901, have risen to 3·80 p.c. in 1931. The Jews, again, who were only 0·03 p.c. in 1871 and 0·31 p.c. in 1901, were 1·50 p.c. in 1931. The adherents of the Greek Orthodox Church, who in earlier years were not distinguished from Greek Catholics (the two together being only 0·29 p.c. in 1901) were 0·99 p.c. in 1931.

Of the total population in 1931 (10,376,786), 16,042 or 0·15 p.c. did not state their religion while 54,164 persons, or 0·52 p.c., belonging to small sects, were classed as "various" and 21,071 or 0·20 p.c. as of "no religion". Of the non-Christian sects, 155,614 or 1·50 p.c. were Jews, 24,087 or 0·23 p.c. were Confucians, 15,784 or 0·15 p.c. were Buddhists and 5,008 or 0·05 p.c. were pagans. In Table 14 the totals for each religion are brought together for all censuses since Confederation. Further analyses showing the percentages of specified religions at each census 1871-1931, and the numbers accredited to each specified religion, by provinces, were given at pp. 127-129 of the 1934-35 Year Book.